

White Meadow Farm (Fisher House)
Cool Spring
Sussex County
Delaware

HABS No. DEL-157

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3-COOL
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

WHITE MEADOW FARM (FISHER HOUSE)

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Location: Cool Spring, Sussex County, Delaware

Brief Statement of Significance: This small, half-timber house of typical plan is important as one of the few surviving examples of such structures from the early eighteenth century.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

"White Meadow" was the name of a 1000-acre tract patented to Alexander Mollestine or Molleston and John Kipshaven jointly on January 16, 1684. Both were members of the General Assembly for Sussex County.

In 1695 Molleston sold his part of the tract to Thomas Fisher as "518 acres near the county road to Cool Spring." Thomas Fisher willed this parcel of land to his son Joshua, November 17, 1713. Joshua Fisher sold the property, with house on it, in 1736, to Robert and Samuel Scott, who sold it the same day to James Martin.

From James Martin, the early purchaser, the place has been generally known in the neighborhood as the "Martin house," and the Martins seem to have occupied it for a considerable time. However, for the sake of continuity of identification, it seems preferable to use the old name of the tract (White Meadow) to avoid the confusions and uncertainties of identity occasioned when succeeding generations, ignorant of an old house's history, know it only as "Mr. Smith's" or Mr. Jones's."

The house, now in a sadly dilapidated condition, is an architectural document of the first importance. It is a one-story-and-attic gambrel-roofed structure, with a cockloft above the high attic. It is of half-timber construction nogged with brick, and the exterior is horizontally weatherboarded.

From a searching scrutiny of every particular of construction, and from verification by accurate measurements of every feature, it is beyond doubt that the house was built at two different times. The addition was undoubtedly made at an early date, but an addition it certainly was.

The house, as first built, had only one large room, about 30 feet long, which took up the whole ground floor. Mid-way the east side was the fireplace, with a stair (probably closed off by a door) winding up beside it to the rooms above.

The plan was virtually the same as at Resurrection Manor in St. Mary's County, Maryland, the first part of which Thomas Cornwalys built in 1652. The 1654 addition to Resurrection Manor house consisted of one large room, with an additional bedroom above it.

That same plan was followed elsewhere in Maryland. Its essential element is the one large room, with fireplace and winding stair beside it.

This plan came up from Maryland and, with various adaptations or slight modifications, appeared again and again in pre-Georgian houses in both Sussex and Kent.

The significant thing about White Meadow Farm is that the original building followed practically the identical Resurrection Manor plan, the only difference being that the fireplace and stair at Resurrection Manor are at the north end of the one large room, while at White Meadow Farm they are at the middle of the east side.

The exterior of the original building was finished with due regard to architectural amenity. Under the box cornice of the south front there is still intact a moulded frieze with dentils. (This is lacking in the later part of the south front.) In the original matched weatherboarding of the south front each board is not only beaded but moulded! The rest of the later weatherboarding is merely matched.

The house is thoroughly indicative of the cultural life of early Delaware and deserves the attention of all who have any interest in the work of historic preservation.

Prepared by Harold Donaldson Eberlein
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
June 1960

Addendum to:
White Meadow Farm (Martin House) (Fisher House)
State Roads 290 and 262
Cool Spring Vicinity
Sussex County
Delaware

HABS No. DE-157

Moved to: Kings Highway, Lewes,
Sussex County, Delaware

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PHOTOGRAPHS